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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9459
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2122
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 0211
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0223
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0702
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0511
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 0218
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0379
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2517
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1900
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY EVAN
FEIGENBAUM,S VISIT TO BISHKEK

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Local media reaction to DAS Evan Feigenbaum,s visit of April 15-20 was primarily neutral, matter of fact reporting with some elements of general suspicion and conspiracy theory thrown in, as is generally the case in local media. Both print and electronic media covered his visit. However, the limited attention of the local media was quickly distracted by news of the violent confrontation between demonstrators and military police on the night of April 19, 2007. Some reporting focused on speculation over how DAS Feigenbaum,s visit was related to the demonstrations, and whether the visit signaled U.S. support for the government or the opposition. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Kyrgyz media was mainly focused on opposition demonstrations in Bishkek throughout the week of April 13-20 and reporting on DAS Feigenbaum,s visit was limited, and largely factual. Reports by Kyrgyz news agencies and TV were focused on the quote from DAS Feigenbaum,s April 18 press conference that &The U.S. will not mediate between the government and opposition,8 and several used it as their story headline. Other reports briefly mentioned the U.S. helicopter donation ceremony attended by DAS Feigenbaum on April 18, his meeting with parliament speaker Murat Sultanov, and his lecture to University students at Kyrgyz National University.

¶3. (SBU) There was also a limited amount of more aggressive and speculative reporting. The online news organization 24.Kg (linked to opposition leader Kulov), known for it,s anti-American stance made a series of short reports. All were matter of fact except for a short news clip asking the question, &In October 2006 (Feigenbaum) visited Kyrgyzstan for the first time and many experts connected the visit with the November rallies in Bishkek. His third visit also

coincides with the rallies. Is it a coincidence or not? AKIpress, an independent news agency, reported shortly after DAS Feigenbaum's press conference that: &Evan Feigenbaum tried to avoid questions regarding the death of the truck driver Alexander Ivanov who was shot down by an American military serviceman on the territory of airport &Manas. When a journalist of the government owned newspaper Slovo Kyrgyzstana asked the following question, During your visit you met with representatives of civil society. Did lawyers for the Ivanovs turn to you?, Evan Feigenbaum talked about how the existence and functioning of the airbase in Bishkek was critical. AKIpress also published a quote from an article in a Russian independent newspaper Nezavisimaya Gazeta from April 17, and an obvious recycling of 24.Kg's news article, which stated: &Every time he arrives in Bishkek it coincides with rallies of the opposition. Coincidence or accident? So far, experts refrain from comments in this regard. Feigenbaum himself let us know that Washington has nothing to do with the events in Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, it wishes stability in the Republic. He reported this in a meeting with parliament speaker Marat Sultanov.

14. (SBU) Elena Avdeyeva, Editor-in-Chief of the pro-opposition newspaper &Belyi Parohod, asked: &Why is the (Kyrgyz) President so afraid of early elections? He is backed by Americans. DAS Evan Feigenbaum openly stated: When I say that the U.S. will provide political support to Kyrgyzstan, I don't mean that the support will go to the opposition., This can't be more explicit! In the meantime the United Front has Russian support, although it's not formal. Political analyst Ulan Kankor speculated in the same issue of Belyi Parohod: &An ORT (Russian TV) reporter said that President Bakiyev's political opponents advocate U.S. interests and, in fact, live on United States funds. This reporter, a master of sensations, said that the American

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Airbase, which the current President reportedly still wants to force out of the country, was the reason for the rallies. It's silly, of course. But on the next day the reason why ORT made this confession, became clear: it was DAS Feigenbaum's visit. Officially he came to explore new spheres of cooperation with Bishkek, but he also met with a number of representatives of the political elite, including Kulov, whose activity arouses Washington's intense interest.

It became known from unofficial sources that the American Embassy had a number of meetings with local establishment representatives right before the visit. The American Embassy was probing the ground (It seems that the warnings about the growing activity of Russians watching the developments in the tension between Bakiyev and his opponents have finally affected Washington, D.C.)

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